



NHDES Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau (DWGB)
COVID-19 Answers to FAQs & Information for Public Water Systems
April 22, 2020

The NHDES, Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau (DWGB), understands that water suppliers may face challenges in the days and weeks ahead related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is as important as ever that we assure that the water people are consuming is safe to drink. Public water systems have a heightened responsibility to protect public health, access to clean water for drinking, cleaning and handwashing is critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. You may have questions or concerns regarding how to handle various situations, in this document the DWGB tries to address as many as possible. As you are aware, the situation is changing rapidly, so the DWGB will do its best to adjust and keep you informed. As information changes this document will be updated and reissued. NHDES has a webpage dedicated to COVID-19 updates which can be found at <https://www.des.nh.gov/covid19/index.htm>.

The DWGB is committed to regular communication with water suppliers to help address these challenges. Among other steps, the DWGB is working with our technical assistance and training partners (New Hampshire Water Works Association (NHWWA), Granite State Rural Water Association (GSRWA) and RCAP Solutions) to get important information out to drinking water systems. The DWGB will be holding regular conference calls for drinking water operators where issues can be raised, discussed and solutions can be developed. The DWGB is also committed to using whatever discretion and flexibility we have to appropriately deal with situations as they arise.

THANK YOU for your service and your dedication to ensuring the people of NH have safe drinking water during this unprecedented event!

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New Information

Any new information since the previous FAQ document was released is indicated with a NEW icon.



NHDES Situation and Contacts

Most NHDES staff members are working remotely. As always, you can reach us via e-mail or by calling. In general, the quickest way to reach us currently is through email. If you do call you will need to leave a message and someone will get back to you. We are doing our best to conduct business as usual. Since DWGB staff is not in the office often to collect mail please submit any necessary paperwork via e-mail as much as possible.

If you experience any issues that may impact your ability to maintain operations and provide safe drinking water please contact us immediately at 603-271-2513 or 603-271-3503 (Monday-Friday 8:00am-4:00pm). For after hours, contact us via the NH State Police at 603-223-4381 and ask for the on-call person at NHDES. You will be directed to the NHDES Spill Response On-Call staff who will contact us.

DWGB General Program Contacts		
Main Line	DWGBinfo@des.nh.gov	603-271-2513
Monitoring Program	DWmonitoring@des.nh.gov	603-271-2513
Operator Certification/Backflow	Wade.Pelham@des.nh.gov	603-271-2410
Emergency Plans	Stephanie.Nistico@des.nh.gov	603-271-0867
Small Systems	Cynthia.Klevens@des.nh.gov	603-271-3108
Large Systems	Richard.Skarinka@des.nh.gov	603-271-2948
Private Wells	Abigail.Fopiano@des.nh.gov	603-271-1974
Additional DWGB Contacts	https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/categories/contactus.htm	

Safety

Operator Safety

First and foremost, is the safety of water system staff. Personnel should follow the latest CDC guidelines for [social distancing and proper hygiene](#) and use [best practices](#) for worker safety.

Sample procedures for customer home visits from a community water system in another state has been shared. This example will be posted soon on the NHDES website at <https://www.des.nh.gov/covid19/index.htm>. Please note, this is just an example and is not a required protocol or official guidance from NHDES.

Sample containers handled by customers, writing utensils, and paper may be a source of contamination. More information is available at <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3989.pdf>.

- Stay in contact with your local emergency management organization and local health district.
- Postpone any non-time-sensitive sampling and conduct no-contact sampling when possible.
- Wash hands frequently and avoid touching your face.
- Maintain recommended distances of six feet from all people and avoid contact with symptomatic or infected individuals.
- Avoid entry into hospitals and senior/long-term care facilities when possible.

CDC COVID-19 Guidance on Critical Infrastructure Workers

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published [interim guidance for COVID-19 safety practices for critical infrastructure workers](#).

Continuing Operation in the Workplace

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community. According to the CDC, in cases where workers have had an exposure but remain asymptomatic, they and their employers should engage in pre-screening, regular monitoring, wearing a face mask, social distancing, and workplace disinfecting and cleaning. As noted in its discussion of face masks, the CDC says employers can approve employees' supplied face coverings in the event of shortages of normal PPE (its ["Cloth Face Covers" webpage](#) provides recommendations on how to make your own). The CDC states that an employee who becomes sick during their work shift should be sent home immediately and that the surfaces in their workplaces be cleaned and disinfected and a list of persons who had contact with the ill employee compiled. The CDC advises that this guidance should be implemented in conjunction with its previously published [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#).

While NHDES is not in a position to endorse or recommend any specific guidance on worksite health and safety measures relative to COVID-19, we are providing this [guidance regarding safety at construction sites from NHDOT](#) for reference purposes.

COVID-19's Survivability in Water

EPA recommends that Americans continue to use and drink tap water as usual. "The presence of COVID-19 has not been detected in drinking water supplies and based on current evidence the risk to water suppliers is low."

Refer to EPA and CDC's messaging about safety of drinking water:

- EPA Coronavirus and Drinking Water and Wastewater
<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>
- CDC Water Transmission and COVID-19
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html>

EPA recommends that citizens continue to use and drink tap water as usual. At this time, there are no indications that COVID-19 is in the drinking water supply or will affect the reliable supply of water.

Sampling

Samples must be taken and results submitted to NHDES as scheduled. If you have questions about monitoring schedules and requirements, please email DWmonitoring@des.nh.gov.

Collecting Samples at Locations That Are Inaccessible

NHDES recommends keeping track of any uncollected samples. The EPA is currently not flagging samples however this may change in the future. More information will be coming as it is available.

NEW

Alternate Sample Locations

If property owners are reluctant to allow access for sampling you can permanently add or change the sample sites for bacteria and lead & copper. To request adding or changing sample site locations for bacteria or lead and copper please send your requested changes to DWmonitoring@des.nh.gov. Once the Engineering Section has approved the new sites you will be notified.

Bacteria:

Public water suppliers have asked about regulatory compliance related specifically to coliform sampling, expressing concerns about sites where access pose challenges as a result of measures taken to address COVID-19. The DWGB is allowing water systems to collect bacteria samples in the distribution system at an alternative location in the distribution system. If necessary to avoid going into people's homes or other facilities that are high-risk or unavailable due to the facility being closed. The selected alternative location must be a location that is representative of the water in the distribution system. An alternative location may include an outside tap or other location that is lower risk for the sampler. Extra care and caution for tap cleaning and flushing prior to sampling should be used for any alternative locations. As always, follow-up sampling will be required for all positive bacteria results. At this time, using an alternate bacteria location does not need pre-approval from NHDES. However, the public water system must provide a clear and concise description of the location where the sample was taken on the sampling analysis request form so that the lab can accurately submit that information to us.

For public water systems scheduled to collect bacteria water samples in April, NHDES understands that your system may or may not be serving water due to the temporary pandemic shutdown. If your water system is still operating and able to service the public, please disregard this message and take your compliance drinking water samples as needed.

For water systems that will not serve the public at all during the month, please continue to monitor the water system as scheduled.

If you are unable to take your scheduled bacteria sample for the month of April due to COVID-19, please contact Chip Mackey (harrison.mackey@des.nh.gov) with your PWSID, water system name, your name and contact information before April 20th, 2020 and when you do expect to be operational again.. NHDES will adjust your schedule. Failure to do so will result in a violation requiring a public notice.

E.coli detections will, as always, necessitate issuing a boil water order with acute public notice, ASAP. You will need to consult with NHDES throughout the incident. During this time, because DWGB staff are working remotely, you must treat it as you would any after-hours or weekend emergency by contacting the NH State Police at 603-223-4381 and asking for the on-call person at NHDES.

NEW

In other states where boil orders have occurred recently, there have been rumors that COVID-19 was in drinking water and the reason for the order. This, of course, was false but in response to their experience. NHDES has since changed the [boil order notice template](#) to make it clear that boil orders have nothing to do with COVID-19.

Lead & Copper:

The DWGB has made adjustments to lead and copper sampling schedules that are allowed within the rules. Water systems monitoring lead & copper annually or triennially that were scheduled to sample in the 2nd quarter of this year have been rescheduled to the 3rd quarter of this year. Unfortunately, the DWGB cannot do that for everyone, if your system is on semi-annual monitoring you need to sample for lead and copper as currently scheduled for samples due by June 30 or by December 31, 2020. If a specific sampling site is unavailable, the DWGB will approve an alternate site. LCR samples should be collected by the homeowner with instructions from the water utility to collect first flush, stagnant samples from the kitchen cold water tap.

Disinfection By-Products (DBP):

The DWGB will make adjustments to DBP sampling schedules that are allowed within the rules. Please contact DWmonitoring@des.nh.gov if you are unable to collect your scheduled DBP sample to request an alternate site or possible rescheduling.

Laboratory Services

The State lab is operating under normal business hours to support drinking water compliance sampling. And, as far as the DWGB knows, all of the private labs are also operating. If you have any questions about lab hours or sample drop off procedures, please contact your laboratory directly.

Sample Drop Off at NH DHHS Public Health Lab?**NEW**

Go to the main entrance door at NHDES on 29 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH. Under the portico there is a table and instructions to call lab staff who will come collect the sample while maintaining social distancing. Please remain at the entrance until your sample is collected.

Site Inspections & Sanitary Surveys

At this time, the DWGB has suspended all in person site visits and will schedule sanitary surveys for a later date. If there is an E.coli detection in your water system, the DWGB should be notified via phone or email within 24 hours as always, and the DWGB staff will work with you remotely to carry out the required follow-up sampling and notices.

Backflow Prevention

Per NH Department of Environmental Services' Administrative Rule Env-Dw 505, the deadline for submitting the annual backflow prevention device testing report is April 1 of the year following the testing. Typically, reports for calendar-year 2019 backflow testing would be due by April 1, 2020. Due to the impacts on public water system resources associated with the current public health situation NHDES is extending the reporting deadline for 2019-year backflow reports from April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2020, to give PWSs additional flexibility. To those that have already submitted annual backflow reports, thank you. For PWSs which have not yet submitted the report, the extension should provide some added reporting flexibility.

On April 10, 2020 Governor Chris Sununu issued [Emergency Order #29](#) establishing temporary modifications of certain Executive Branch deadlines and requirements. Due to the state of emergency, all large public water systems are only required to test back flow prevention devices annually for 2020. In accordance with the order, NHDES will only require backflow prevention devices which protect large public water systems to be tested once in 2020. This applies to devices on high-hazard connections and on low-hazard connections. If a public water system decides to test more frequently they may choose to do that, however for calendar year 2020 NHDES will only require one routine test for each device. If you have any questions please contact wade.pelham@des.nh.gov or (603) 271-2410.

Operators & Operator Certification

It is important at this time, as always, to have NH certified operators responsible for the safety and operation of public water systems in NH. If a certified primary operator becomes no longer able to serve a NH PWS, it is important for the certified individual to notify the PWS ownership/management and NHDES as soon as possible (refer to contact chart above). This communicates the status of operations at the individual PWS and also allows the DWGB to better track impacts to operator availability on a statewide level.

Modified Staff Schedules To Reduce Exposure

Many utilities are modifying schedules to reduce exposure while still maintaining operational coverage. Water utilities are intentionally reducing staffing levels to a minimum in a proactive effort to reduce the potential for COVID-19 related impacts. SCADA and remote monitoring, where available, are proving valuable in supporting operations while helping to allow PWS staff to observe public health related distancing guidance. As noted in the Sampling section above the DWGB has updated guidance for some sampling procedures to account for social distancing and property access restriction considerations.

Backup Operators

If a PWS needs additional operational support, NHDES maintains a list of contract water works operators (<https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pip/factsheets/dwgb/documents/dwgb-7-2.pdf>) which may be able to provide services. In addition, GSRWA is maintaining a [list of backup operators](#) available on their website.

If additional hands are needed, other individuals can perform basic work at NH PWSs provided it is under the direction of a NH certified primary operator, however only certified operators can make water quality or quantity decisions.

NH regulations do provide for reciprocity for water operators from other states. Operators from other states may apply for NH reciprocity provided they meet the NH education and experience requirements (detailed in Env-Dw 502) for the certification grade level sought. Please contact Wade Pelham at wade.pelham@des.nh.gov for more information.

NH regulations allow for temporary modified certification procedures during extenuating circumstances. NHDES will continue to monitor the situation, its impact on public water systems and its workforce and will be prepared to authorize modified procedures as events require.

Operator Training

As an interim measure, NHDES is allowing GSRWA, RCAP and NHWWA to provide remote learning opportunities until in-person training can resume, provided a platform is used that can validate attendance. Visit partner websites for available training (contact information is available at the end of the document).

Chemicals

Check in with your chemical suppliers to see if any deliveries may be impacted, and what you can do to ensure you have enough supply through advance purchases. Also check in with other key suppliers for status on materials.

Notify the appropriate DWGB engineer contact (see chart above) if you need to suspend any treatment processes due to shortages of chemical feed supplies. At this time, disinfection is the highest treatment priority for those systems that are required to disinfect such as surface water systems.

Essential/Critical Personnel

On Thursday, March 26, 2020, Governor Chris Sununu released Emergency Order #17, mandating the closure of all non-essential businesses and requiring Granite Staters to stay at home. Information regarding all NH Emergency Orders is available at <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/>.

Pursuant to Emergency Order #17, the State of New Hampshire has compiled a list of industry sectors that provide essential services and support to COVID-19 and the core missions of the State. Entities that fall under this guidance shall continue to operate with necessary staff to complete critical and essential functions. A list of designated "Essential Services" can be found at https://www.nheconomy.com/NHEconomy/media/NH-Economy/Exhibit-A-to-Emergency-Order-17-List-of-Essential-Businesses_1.pdf. Below is the list of essential services specific to Water, Wastewater and Public Works.

Waste and Wastewater

Employees needed to operate and maintain public and private drinking water and wastewater/drainage infrastructure, including:

- Operational staff at water authorities
- Operational staff at community water systems
- Operational staff at wastewater treatment facilities
- Workers repairing water and wastewater conveyances or construction necessary to maintain critical operations at water and wastewater facilities, and workers performing required sampling or monitoring
- Operational staff for water distribution and testing
- Operational staff at wastewater collection facilities
- Operational staff and technical support for SCADA Control systems
- Chemical disinfectant suppliers for wastewater and personnel protection
- Workers that maintain digital systems infrastructure supporting water and wastewater operations
- Labs that provide analytical services to ensure public water systems are providing safe drinking water
- Drinking water well drillers and pump installers

Public Works

- Workers who support the operation, inspection, and maintenance of essential dams, locks and levees
- Workers who support the operation, inspection, and maintenance of essential public works facilities and operations, including roads and bridges, water and sewer main breaks, fleet maintenance personnel, construction of critical or strategic infrastructure, traffic signal maintenance, emergency location services for buried utilities, maintenance of digital systems infrastructure supporting public works operations, and other emergent issues
- Workers – including contracted vendors – involved in the construction of critical or strategic infrastructure including public works construction, airport operations, water, sewer, gas, electrical, nuclear, oil refining and other critical energy services, roads and highways, public transportation, solid waste collection and removal, municipal transfer stations, and internet, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services)
- Workers such as plumbers, electricians, exterminators, inspectors and other service providers who provide services that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences, construction sites and projects, and needed facilities
- Support, such as road and line clearing and utility relocation, to ensure the availability of needed facilities, transportation, energy and communications
- Support to ensure the effective removal, storage, and disposal of residential and commercial solid waste and hazardous waste
- Licensed site clean-up professionals and other workers addressing hazardous spills, waste sites, and remediation
- Workers who support the operation, maintenance and public safety of state parks, forests, wildlife management areas, water supply protection lands, and other critical natural resources
- Workers who support storm clean-up operations (e.g., foresters)

NEW

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has released Version 3.0 of the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers list. Version 3.0 provides clarity around a range of positions needed to support the critical infrastructure functions laid out in the original guidance and Version 2.0. This iteration includes a reorganization of the section around Healthcare and Public Health and more detail to clarify essential workers; emphasis for Emergency Medical Services workers; and adds lawyers and legal aid workers. Also included is language focused on sustained access and freedom of movement; a reference to the CDC guidance on safety for critical infrastructure workers; and a statement saying sick employees should avoid the workplace and the workforce. In worker categories, all references to “employees” or “contractors” have been changed to “workers.”

https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Version_3.0_CISA_Guidance_on_Essential_Critical_Infrastructure_Workers_3.pdf

Credentials/Documentation of Essential Workers

There is no specific document needed to prove you are essential. However, DWGB does suggest making sure you have your ID and a company ID or business card.

EPA has provided a water utility template that state, localities and water utilities can use to provide documentation to workers that are considered essential:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-04/water_utility_template_covid19.docx

Documenting & Tracking Expenses

Have discussions regarding finances associated with the response and sustaining operations. Are appropriate staff able to make emergency purchases if needed? It is critical that this is established ahead of time. **Documentation is important.** Remember to track ALL time and expenses related to your response to COVID-19. This information can be used as part of a post-incident investigation or if federal funds become available for assistance.

On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a Nationwide Emergency Declaration in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The State of New Hampshire is in the process of drafting a request for a Major Disaster Declaration that will go to Governor Sununu for review before being sent to the President for approval. It is very important to track and document all of your expenses related to the COVID-19 event in case funds become available for reimbursement.

NEW

On Thursday, April 16, FEMA released the “Disaster Financial Management Guide” to support jurisdictions in establishing and implementing sound disaster financial management practices, which are critical for successful response and recovery. The guide takes an all-hazards approach and addresses a broad range of issues and contains concepts, principles and resources applicable to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic response environment. The guide identifies the capabilities and activities necessary to prepare and successfully implement disaster financial management while maintaining fiscal responsibility throughout response and recovery operations. This includes considerations and practices necessary to track, calculate and justify the costs of an emergency; support local reimbursement reconciliation; avoid de-obligation of grant funding; and effectively fund and implement recovery projects and priorities. The Guide and Fact Sheet are available at <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/187126>

Funding

Grants and Loans

At this time DWGB plans to move forward with all of their regular grant programs (source water protection grants, asset management grants, etc.) and the 2020 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Pre-Application round. Pre-applications for the 2020 DWSRF round are available at <https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/capacity/documents/2020-dwsrf-preapp-solicitation.pdf> and are due June 15, 2020.

DWSRF Loan Disbursements

Loan disbursements or requests for grant funds should be submitted electronically to the appropriate program contact. Program contacts are available at https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/capacity/documents/pws_funding_resources.pdf. DWGB staff will process your requests as quickly as possible however, we do ask for your patience as we work within this new environment.

Public Meetings

Some municipalities, village districts and other water systems may not have been able to conduct their annual meetings. The Governor issued a memorandum on How to Conduct Emergency Meetings in Compliance with New Hampshire's Right-to-Know Law (RSA Chapter 91-A) in light of COVID-19 Concerns and applicable Executive and Emergency Orders. This memorandum provides guidance on how to hold emergency meetings in light of Executive Order 2020-04 (declaring a State of Emergency) and Emergency Order #12 (temporarily modifying public access under RSA Chapter 91-A). It sets forth specific procedures that must be followed during the State of Emergency.

For more information, please see the [emergency meeting guidance checklist](#) and the right-to-know checklist at <https://www.des.nh.gov/covid19/documents/rtk-checklist.docx>.


Seasonal Systems

Seasonal Water Systems

If you own or operate a seasonal water system, and are scheduled to open for the season in April, NHDES strongly recommends that you perform all of your seasonal startup procedures and take the schedule samples so that you will be ready to open in a moment's notice when the time comes.

If you choose to wait and open the water system at a later date, please contact Amy Rousseau (amy.rousseau@des.nh.gov) on or before the 20th of the month that you were scheduled to open with your PWSID, water system name, your name and contact information, and state your new planned opening date. NHDES will adjust your sampling schedule. You now will have to take a routine bacteria sample in your new planned opening month and will need to perform your seasonal startup procedure at that time. Failure to do so will result in a violation requiring a public notice.

Campgrounds and RV Parks

 There has been conflicting messages about whether or not campgrounds in NH are essential businesses allowed to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. While initially they were not considered essential, on April 15, 2020 an update to [Emergency Order 17 was issued](#) stating that campgrounds are considered essential “only for the purposes of providing parcels of land rented for the placement of a tent or recreational vehicles.” Since that time, the Governor has indicated that they continue to review whether campgrounds should be open but this is the current state of things.

Please note that while campgrounds are designated as essential, they are urged to follow social distancing protocols in accordance with guidance from the Department of Public Health, including but not limited to:

1. Prohibiting all gatherings with more than 10 individuals;
2. Keeping all personnel six feet apart; and
3. Encouraging employees to stay home when sick, and sending home those who report feeling ill or display symptoms.

In light of the update to Emergency Order 17, if you have already made arrangements with Amy Rousseau that may change with this new information, please contact her at amy.rousseau@des.nh.gov or 603-271-0893 to discuss.

Turning on Seasonal Water Services During COVID-19

Please notify the DWGB if you decide to delay startup of your seasonal water system, as these dates impact your sampling requirements. Other than schedule changes, seasonal system startups should follow the normal startup procedures including shock chlorination and flushing of the full system, and submittal of your startup certification and clean bacteria sample to the DWGB.

Emergency Plans & Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP)

If you haven't already, it is very important to take the time to review your Emergency Response Plan (ERP) with staff. Make sure your plan is updated to ensure continuity of operations in the event your utility is impacted.

Make contact with your local Emergency Management Director (EMD). Requests for assistance should be funneled through your local EMD.

A COOP is a document that ensures essential operations can be performed during manmade or natural disasters to provide essential services. Utilities can develop a COOP to be all-encompassing (i.e., all-hazards approach), or it can be specific to situations like a pandemic. Please see the documents below for COOP templates.

EPA Pandemic Incident Action Checklist

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/pandemic_iac_final_032620_508_fillable.pdf

COOP Templates:

- NH Continuity of Operations Plan Template https://prd.blogs.nh.gov/dos/hsem/?page_id=2783
- National Rural Water Association Water System [Pandemic Template](#)
- Business Pandemic Influenza Planning [Checklist](#)
- The **Knowledge Retention Tool** Spreadsheet for Small Water Systems is an Excel spreadsheet that helps operators consolidate system information into one location, enabling increased organization and coordination among operators. Originally designed to assist in personnel transition, the tool encompasses a wide variety of information that a new or contract operator would need to effectively manage and operate a small water system. However, this tool could be helpful during a pandemic to list important processes. In the case of staff reduction due to illness others stepping in will have access to important procedures in addition to any Standard Operating Procedures. [Knowledge Retention Tool Spreadsheet for Small Water Systems.xlsx](#)

Return to Normal

When things begin to get back to normal, water systems should follow proper startup and flushing procedures at locations that have been closed temporarily, or have a significant reduction in water use due to COVID-19.

Startup and Flushing Procedures for Municipal and Large Water Systems

Facilities such as restaurants, schools, and businesses served by a municipal/large water system may be temporarily closed or have substantially reduced their water consumption due to the social distancing requirements. All public water systems have continued to monitor water quality in accordance with their water sampling plans including bacteria and all regulated water parameters. However, water may remain stagnant in the piping of closed facilities which can cause conditions that can increase the risk for growth of bacteria including Legionella, and create unsafe levels of lead or copper. To ensure that water is safe to drink when the facility is returned to normal service, it is recommended that all hot and cold taps be flushed through all points (faucets, showers, ice-machines, dishwashers) to reintroduce fresh water throughout the building. Hot water taps should be flushed until it reaches its maximum temperature, and cold water taps should be flushed until water runs cold, indicating fresh water from the main.

Startup and Flushing Procedures for Non-seasonal, Stand-alone Water Systems

Small public water systems that have been temporarily closed such as schools, daycares, restaurants or small businesses should continue all scheduled water quality sampling as directed by DWGB, even if temporarily closed, to maintain your readiness to reopen when permitted to do so. Please see specific sampling guidance under other FAQs. This guidance applies to systems that have maintained water system pressure throughout the shutdown. Seasonal systems that depressurize their piping must follow the seasonal startup procedures and certification to the state.

To ensure that water is safe to drink following this temporary shut-down or reduction in water use, it is recommended that all hot and cold taps be flushed through all points (faucets, showers, ice-machines, dishwashers) to reintroduce fresh water throughout the building. Hot water taps should be flushed until it reaches its maximum temperature, and cold water taps should be flushed until water runs cold,

indicating fresh water from the well source. Once thorough flushing is completed, please continue your scheduled water quality sampling.

Additional Guidance

For additional guidance to ensure the safety of the buildings water system and devices after a prolonged shutdown please see the CDC's [Guidance for Building Water Systems](#), the Environmental Science Policy & Research Institute's [Flushing Guidance](#) and other references listed [here](#).

NEW

System Operations

Routine Flushing

Should you decide to alter your flushing schedule, NHDES recommends being aware of potential impacts including 1) limited staffing and resources to conduct flushing; 2) being able to maintain social distancing as you perform flushing; and 3) potentially disrupting water quality to your customers during the day. Some systems are planning to continue with flushing procedures as would be performed under normal circumstances but while maintaining social distancing. Other systems have expressed delaying their flushing schedule a few weeks out due to reduced staffing or concerns about potentially discolored water. NHDES is seeking information from other states to get a regional-wide standpoint on flushing and will provide updates as information becomes available.

Reductions in Revenues

Loss of revenue may continue to impact water systems in the coming months. It's likely that smaller systems are going to see more of the impacts of revenue loss than larger systems. Some systems have noticed a deficit in their first quarter from customers not being able to pay bills. It's likely that this deficit will continue into the second quarter. NHDES participates in discussions with the National Water and Wastewater Agency Networks (WARNs) discussing options for affordability, prioritizing PPE, and what is covered under FEMA reimbursements. Unfortunately, loss of revenue is not eligible for FEMA reimbursement at this time. NHDES will provide updates as more information becomes available. It is important to track this information throughout this event.

NHDES has frequent discussions with partners, NHWWA, RCAP and GSRWA, regarding solutions to offset the reduction in revenue many systems are experiencing due to less water being used and customers not paying their water bills. The partners are available to assist with asset management, emergency planning, applications for any available funding, projecting cash flow and lack of revenue. Partner contact information is listed at the end this document.

Consumer Confidence Reports

For community water systems, your Consumer Confidence Reports are due as normal. The CCR must be delivered to ALL customers (billing units and/or service connections) and to NHDES by July 1. Please visit the [Consumer Confidence Webpage](#) for information on completing your CCR.

Customer Outreach

If you haven't reached out to your customers yet now is the time. Reassure them that the water is safe to drink and talk about what actions you have taken. Provide updates on water system websites or social media.

GSRWA can provide technical assistance by helping operators communicate with their customers by assisting with establishing websites, email and text notification systems, and setting up virtual meetings. For more information please visit <http://www.granitestatewater.org/> or call (603) 756-3670.

NEW

The [Value of Water Campaign](#) helps address common themes that have arisen over the course of COVID-19. As you communicate with your water customers, be sure to emphasize the assurance that water is safe to drink and the importance of not flushing wipes. Click on the link to learn more about the Value of Water Campaign and improve communication to your water customers.

DWGB Events

All DWGB training events through May have either been cancelled or postponed.

- Drinking Water Operator Certification Exam – April 21, 2020 - POSTPONED, new date TBD
- Drinking Water Festival & Science Fair – CANCELLED - Tentatively scheduled for May 5th, 2021 in Keene
- Source Water Protection Workshop – May 15, 2020 – POSTPONED to December 2020

Links to More Information

There are many resources available. Below are just a few that can assist with your preparations and response.

NH Department of Environmental Services COVID-19 website

- www.des.nh.gov

NH Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 website

- <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/2019-ncov.htm>

American Water Works Association

- <https://www.awwa.org/AWWA-Articles/coronavirus-and-water>
- *Utility Actions to Sustain Operations During COVID-19* webinar. This webinar shared practices that utilities have implemented to prepare and respond to COVID-19
<https://www.gotostage.com/channel/awwa-covid-19>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidance on Coronavirus and Drinking Water and Wastewater

- www.epa.gov/coronavirus
- <https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>
- [Frequent questions](#) about drinking water and wastewater and Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Water Environmental Federation

- <https://www.wef.org/news-hub/wef-news/the-water-professionals-guide-to-the-2019-novel-coronavirus/>

WaterISAC

A membership organization and international security network created by and for the water & wastewater sector.

- <https://www.waterisac.org/>
- <https://www.waterisac.org/portal/business-continuity-planning-event-influenza-pandemic-reference-guide>

Public Works Net (PW.Net)

An electronic mailing list for open discussion among people who are associated with Public Works.

To register go to: <https://t2.unh.edu/public-works-email-list>

NH Public Works Mutual Aid Program (NHPWMA)

NHPWMA has members from all over the state. Assistance could include such assistance as sharing of water treatment chemicals. The membership list and how to join is available at <https://t2.unh.edu/ma/>.

UNH Technology Transfer (T2) Center

NH Departments of Public Work & COVID 19 - Special Resource Document from UNH T2

<https://t2.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/nhdpw-covid19.pdf>.

The UNH T2 hosts several examples of Policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) from local sources, as well as links to outside resources that may be of interest. The collection is organized by subject matter <https://t2.unh.edu/policies-standard-operating-procedures#collapse-1-3>.

On Thursday, 4/9/20, the UNH T2 hosted a *Chit-Chat and Chew with T2*, special e-series!

Join this weekly conference call to hear about how public works is dealing with the new challenges and adjusting to a different work environment. Join by computer or phone! Zoom meeting details are on the T2 [Training Calendar](#).

WaterOperator.org

This is a free service to support small local community water and wastewater operators with comprehensive resources and information in one easy-to-use place and serves the 800+ training, primacy, and technical service organizations, by helping operators get to their information. Sign up for the e-newsletter at www.wateroperator.org.

Environmental Finance Center Network (EFCN)

<https://efcnetwork.org/>

Webinar: A Conversation Regarding Coronavirus and How it Might Affect Your Small Water System's Finances & Management under Workshops & Webinars - Past Events

Water Operator Conference Calls

The DWGB is hosting weekly conference calls to update water operators on activities at the state level, answer any questions that you may have, hear your ideas on response efforts and hear about concerns or issues you are having during this COVID-19 crisis.

Date: Wednesdays

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Contact Stephanie Nistico at stephanie.nistico@des.nh.gov for call-in information.

Partners

Our NH partners are a great resource for technical assistance, training and guidance. Each of these organizations has a specific COVID-19 resource page.

- **Granite State Rural Water Association**
Jennifer Palmiotto, Executive Director 603-756-3670 <http://granitestatewater.org>
jpalmiotto@granitestatewater.org
- **NH Water Works Association**
Boyd Smith, Executive Director 603-415-3959 <https://www.nhwwa.org/>
bsmith@nhwwa.org
- **RCAP Solutions, Inc.**
Erick Toledo, NH State Lead 978-227-2277 www.rcapsolutions.org
etoledo@rcapsolutions.org